THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
GENERAL SECTION
MILITARY HISTORY COMMITTEE
FORT BENNING, GEORGIA

ADVANCED OFFICERS COURSE
1946-1947

THE ACTION OF COMPANY "G" 31ST INFANTRY (PHILIPPINE DIV.)
ABUCAY HACIENDA, 15-25 JANUARY 1942
(THE STRUGGLE FOR THE PHILIPPINES)
(Personal experience of a Company Commander)

Type of operation described:
COMPANY AS PART OF REGIMENT IN COUNTER ATTACK, DEFENSE, WITHDRAWAL

Major John I. Pray, Infantry

283

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
Index	1
Bibliography	2
Introduction	3-5
Action	6-19
Analysis and Criticism	20-22
Lessons	22-24
Map - Orientation	25
Map #1	26
Map #2 (Sketch)	27

284

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. I Saw the Fall of the Philippines, Carlos P. Romulo (1943)
(a highly colored collection of stories without any actual military details)

2. Bataan: The Judgement Seat, Lt. Col. Allison Ind (1944)
(a good personal account dealing with Air Corps)

3. War with Japan-Part I, Dept. Military Art and Engineering, U.S.M.A. West Point (1945)
(this was the best account I could find but in the details of small units - 31st Inf. - it was not completely accurate)

4. Diary, Col. Jasper Brady
(a compilation from memory of 31st Inf. personnel while in Prisoner of War Camp)

5. Diary, Maj. L. C. Moffitt
(a compilation from memory of 31st Inf. personnel while in Prisoner of War Camp)

6. The Fall of the Philippines, Military Review (Aug. 1946)
(good for general picture - no detail)

7. Report of Operations of South Luzon Force, Bataan Defense Force, and II Philippine Corps in defense of South Luzon and Bataan from 8 Dec., 1941 to 9 April 1942
(good maps - this document was prepared from memory after the recovery of concerned personnel - it consists of accounts written by various Unit Commanders and compiled by II Corps G-2 - no account wassecured from the 31st Inf. Commander, consequently the small details are missing - it is the best available account, however, some details appear to me to be biased and inaccurate)

8. Rear Guard in Luzon, Capt. John Wheeler, Cav. Journal (1943)
(account of action of 26th Cav. - helps give general situation)

9. Fighting 26th, Clark Lee, Cav. Journal (Mar.-Apr. 1943)
(account of action of 26th Cav. - helps give general situation)

10. Philippine Campaign, Lt. Col. C.S. Babcock, Cav. Journal (1943)
(a very interesting account derived from Japanese News releases while author was interned in Japan. Places and Japanese troop numbers are good - detail and dates are not too accurate.)

11. Cable 97, Field Artillery Journal (1942)

12. Report of Operations of USAFFE and USFIP in the Philippine Islands (1941-1942)
(gives a good general picture but in some details it is not as I remember it - very good maps - prepared in the same manner and by the same personnel as #7)

285

THE ACTION OF COMPANY "G" 31ST INFANTRY (PHILIPPINE DIV.)
ABUCAY HACIENDA, 15-25 JANUARY 1942
(THE STRUGGLE FOR THE PHILIPPINES)
(Personal experience of a Company Commander)

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the action of Company "G", 2nd Battalion, 31st Infantry, Philippine Division, in the counter attack to reestablish the MLR of the II Philippine Corps in the vicinity of the Abucay Hacienda from 15 January 1942 through the withdrawal on 24-25 January 1942.

In order that the reader may better understand the lessons to be learned, a short discussion of the conditions prior to the outbreak of hostilities and the tactical situation necessitating the counter attack will precede the detailed account of the action.

The War began 8 December 1941 in the Philippine Islands. Some big changes were in the process of being made, in which the 31st Inf. was contributing her share, when the Japanese cut them short by commencing hostilities. The 31st Inf. was stripped of officers and experienced Non Commissioned officers to furnish instructors for the Philippine Army which was being activated beginning August 1941. "G" Company sent 10 Non Commissioned officers and all but one officer. There remained one officer and 93 men. This was generally true of all rifle companies of the 31st Inf. The heavy weapons companies had approximately two officers and 120 men. In a unit of such small size this loss was considerable. Because the units were so small we had been training every man for a higher position in expectation of expansion. About two thirds of the Company had arrived after May 1941 as Selective Service replacements. Some old soldiers had been in the Philippines for more than two years - some were returned to the States and others extended involuntarily.

The other two Infantry Regiments of the Philippine Division - the 45th Inf. (P.S) and the 57th (P.S) had been building up for some time but had not reached T.O. strength.

Company "G" was organized into two rifle platoons of three squads each (a squad was composed of a corpl and seven or eight men), and a weapons platoon (the two 60 mm mortars were turned in because there was no 60 mm mortar ammunition in the Philippines) of two squads. Each rifle squad had a B.A.R. and the weapons squad a light air-cooled machine gun. Each Bn had two 81 mm mortars but only about 25 rds of 81 mm ammunition per mortar. Fortunately, there was quite a bit of three-inch Trench Mortar ammunition available, but though this would work it was neither accurate nor dependable. Communication was entirely by runner within the Bn except for one SCR 138 - walky-talky.

The main value of the Philippine Islands to the Japanese was the harbor of Manila Bay. Consequently the defense of the Philippine Islands was based on denying the Japanese this Harbor. By holding Corregidor and the Bataan peninsula we could accomplish the above mission. If Bataan fell Corregidor became untenable since the mountains of Bataan overlooked the smaller hills of Corregidor.

Corregidor and its adjacent forts were practically impregnable from the sea so to gain the harbor the Japanese must clear Bataan and then attack Corregidor from the rear. There were two natural key terrain features on Bataan, Mt. Natib and Mt. Samat. These terrain features dominated the surrounding countryside by giving their possessor almost unlimited observation. The Abucay position (see Map #1) protecting this observation ran from the Abucay Hacienda on the East slope of Mt. Natib through Mabatang to Manila Bay.

Whoever held Mt. Natib had artillery and mortar support because of the observation. This was before the artillery forward observer team came into being - at any rate we had no forward observer. During the month of December the position astride the East Road was begun by the 31st Infantry. One of the jobs of the 31st Inf. was to lay out the trace of the MLR and begin construction of foxholes, machine gun emplacements, and barbed wire entanglements. The 57th Inf. (P.S.) took over this position while the 31st Inf. was holding at Layac Junction and improved the position. It was this position astride the East Road that the Japanese first attacked in strength (7). Several thousand Japanese were killed in the assault on this position. The Japanese next shifted higher up against the 41st Division (P.A.) but were again repulsed with heavy losses. The artillery observation played an important role in each repulse. It became apparent to the Japanese that they must take Mt. Natib if they intended to breach the line. Without too much delay they infiltrated small units around the flank of the 51st Div. (P.A.) which anchored the line on the eastern slope of Mt. Natib and drove them from the position in disorder (7). Col. E. T. Lewis with the 43rd Inf. (P.A.) extended the line of the 41st Div. (P.A.) and refused the flank. The loss of Mt. Natib cut artillery observation to practically nothing. Without artillery support and with enemy on the flank the entire line was threatened (7). II Corps then committed their reserve in a counter attack to reestablish the line and preserve the position. The Philippine Div. (less the 57th Combat Team) was in Reserve (7).

The physical condition of the individual soldier was not too good even at this time. We had been on Filipino ration (about one half an American ration) since 13 December 1941 and on one half of that since 5 January 1942. This was partially offset by Company buying and moonlight requisition.

(7) P.28, P. 31, P. 33

ACTION

In the afternoon of 15 January 1942 the 31st Inf. received a warning order to be prepared to move to Balanga to back up the 51st Div. (P.A.) in case of a break through. At this time the 31st Inf. was engaged preparing the right flank of the Mt. Samat battle position again astride the East Rd (see Map #1). An extra bandolier of ammunition was issued each man. About midnight we received orders to move to the P.A. Cadre Barracks just west of Balanga. After arriving in this assembly area we fed a hot meal - the last for three days. The next morning we looked over the area - several rounds of large calibre artillery came over but no casualties. It had been an artillery position and considerable counter battery had been fired into it. I sent Lt. Franklin - just recently assigned to "G" Company - to reconnoiter an overland route to the Abucay road. He did not rejoin the Company until about 1700 the next day because the Company moved by road to the counter attack assembly area before he returned.

On 16 January 1942 at about 1300 Maj. Lloyd C. Moffitt, C.O. 2nd Bn 31st Inf. called the Company Commanders together and gave us the following situation and fragmentary order. The Bn officers present were Maj. Moffitt, Maj. O'Donovan, Capt. R. Sauer, Capt. D. Hunkins, Capt. E. Conrad, Capt. R. Hibbs (Dr.), Lt. W. Tooley (Com. Off.), Lt. R. Magee (Adj.) and myself. The 51st Div. (P.A.) has disintegrated; the 41st Div. is holding with the 43rd Inf. Regiment refusing the left flank. The 31st C.T. will counter attack and reestablish the MLR. Upon its reestablishment it will be relieved by the 11th Div. (P.A.). The 31st C.T. will move 2nd Bn, 1st Bn, 3rd Bn, self propelled art., etc. (4).

(4) P. 43

This Bn will move out immediately in the order "G", "F", "E" and "H" companies. "G" Company will form advance guard. We will move by combination trail and rd. to the Abucay Hacienda Rd. up the Hacienda Rd until we contact the 43rd Inf. (P.A.). Attack orders will come later. C.P. will be with "F" Company. No time was taken to organize - everyone was urged to hurry. We organized and picked up interval as we moved out. Airplanes had been active overhead all day and became more active as we took to the Road. (Any mention of airplanes will mean Japanese airplanes - U.S. planes were not seen during this action). They bombed and strafed but not much damage was done. We marched for two hours but at the end of that time we had to take a break because we were marching up hill and at an increased rate. The march was slowed somewhat by the low flying planes as we dispersed when they came down. Also the Japanese knew an attack was forming. We force marched up hill for the rest of the afternoon, marching 12-15 miles and reached the flank of the 43rd Inf. (P.A.) by 1900. On the way up we were passed by many fleeing Filipinos and some transportation. We formed a march outpost to the right of the Road. "F" Company did likewise on the left. (See Map #2). The men were quite tired and were paired off to sleep. No food or water here. Several short rounds of our own artillery landed in our area, however, no one was hurt. I accompanied Maj. Moffitt to the 43rd Inf. (P.A.) C.P. where we talked to Col. E.T. Lewis, the American Commander and instructor to the Philippine Army Regiment. He told us what he knew of the situation which wasn't much. He hadn't slept many hours for the last five or six days.

The Japanese mortar, artillery fire, and bombing had been extremely heavy. The 51st Div. (P.A.) had disintegrated and their flank had been exposed for several days. There was no actual contact with the Japs but patrols had been active all along the flank. They didn't know what to expect. His Filipino troops had behaved in an extremely fine manner. Our arrival was a big morale booster. Col. Lewis stated that our rt flank would be secure and his men would move back to their original positions without hesitation as we moved forward.

Maj. Moffitt went down the road to the Temporary Regimental C.P. for the complete attack order. He returned about 0100 of 17 January 1942 and issued his orders to the Bn Officers. We would move at once up the Road to trail #12 from which we would attack at 0800. "G" Company on the left astride trail #12. "E" Company on the right, "F" Company in Reserve, "H" Company (less M.G. platoon attached to "G" and "E" Companies) in general support. The 1st Bn would be on our left. We would attack up trail #12 and seize the front line positions on the old MLR. We moved on up the Road another 800 yds to trail #12. We passed through a mango grove, with some wounded Filipinos in it, near a water pipe from the Hacienda and filled all canteens. We took up a position with "F" Company on the left of the Road and "G" Company on the right. (See Map #2). The men were again paired off. Capt. Ellis arrived with about 20 or 30 Filipinos he had rounded up. Regiment had sent them up to be attached to the companies. Each company had several. We used them to carry ammunition for the Machine Guns but all disappeared by noon the next day.

At daylight we moved over to the line of Departure - a change of direction of about ninety degrees. Formation "G" Company on the left, "E" Company on the right, (each with one platoon of Machine Guns attached), "F" Company in Reserve. 1st Bn, 31st on the left, the 2nd Bn 43rd Inf. P.A. on the right. We crossed the Line of Departure at 0815((7) gives daylight, (4) gives 0800 but we actually started at the time given). As soon as we crossed the L.D. we received mortar and sniper fire. In addition a terrific cracking and banging was heard all around us. We later found them to be firecrackers developed to sound like rifle and Machine Gun fire. They created the impression that we were surrounded. Also it was very difficult to locate the actual snipers. Apparently these fire crackers were fired from knee mortars or dropped from airplanes. We went forward about 400 yds when my left platoon was stopped by enemy Machine Guns sited down lanes in the sugar cane field. The Right platoon also under fire from the edge of the cane field continued forward and finally got around the Jap flank and into a deep Ravine - about 75 ft deep and exceedingly steep which was not shown correctly on the Battalion Commanders map. Maps were very scarce and those available were inaccurate. This platoon stopped quite naturally in the Ravine for a short reorganization - about five or six men had been hit. All were walking wounded since the Japs were using a 27 cal. rifle. "B" Company, on the left, had several men killed by a 30 cal. automatic weapon in the cane field. They withdrew and moved to the left. I requested their help in reducing this strong point since the ground sloped down from their side. This request was refused. It was now about 1100. The Bn Commander ordered me to withdraw my left platoon, pick up my right platoon and move to the right of "E" Company. From there I was to launch an attack and

clear the crest of the far bank of the Ravine and pinch out "E" Company. "F" Company was put in "G" Company's place with orders to attack straight to the front. By the time "G" Company reached a position from which to make an assault "F" Company had tried to cross and failed because of Machine Guns, protected by snipers in trees, sited to cover the lip of the Ravine. As "G" Company emerged from the Ravine several men were hit as it came under the same fire. The Company halted in place while small units tried to knock them out with hand grenades. Several Machine Guns were knocked out. The Battalion Commander ordered all units back across the Ravine so that the mortars could shell the Mango Grove. In the bottom of the Ravine was a small stream and several springs coming from the Rock. Picking the cleanest, word was passed to fill canteens - the men had had no water since the preceding night so knowing the effect of the tropics it was apparent some men would drink from the stream anyway and the spring was probably the least contaminated. We climbed the Ravine again - it was very hard going and rested on the bank. The mortar opened up and dropped a lot of shells into the grove. There were plenty of tree bursts. However, the shells did not all explode - many were wild, the 3 inch ammunition did not fit too well. We again worked down into the draw and up the other side. The Automatic fire seemed to be as great as ever. We held a conference among the three Company Commanders and decided, two to one, to make a concerted attack. As soon as the Heavy Machine Guns were in position we would all take off together - leaving one platoon of "G" Company covering our flank. About this time, 1730, a messenger from Battalion headquarters came looking for me. He would go a few steps and then shout "Capt. Pray". I finally answered and when the runner arrived with the message, the snipers zeroed in. The Weapons platoon

leader who was talking to me had his finger blown off by what appeared to be an explosive bullet. The message ordered us to fall back to the other side of the Ravine and take up a defensive position for the night. For disposition see Map #2.

Upon arriving back at the near side of the Ravine I was ordered to establish contact with "B" Company, who were supposed to be about 200 yds on the left (West) of trail #12. The men of the Company, particularly the attached Machine Gun platoon, were exhausted from climbing the Ravine 3 times - without food two days. I told the 1st Sgt. to have one platoon take up a position on each side of the trail for the night. Taking a runner I set out to establish contact with "B" Company. As I passed Battalion Headquarters (Battalion Headquarters was in a Ravine about 150 yds from the Big Ravine - see Map #2) Lt. Franklin joined me. We went laterally along a cane trail for about 300 yards and then turned toward the Ravine. About ten yards from the edge of the cane field I saw an abandoned automatic rifle belt. I stopped to exchange it for my pistol belt so that I could carry rifle ammunition for the rifle I had picked up. Lt. Franklin walked on ahead. He called back, "There are two dead bodies here." Suddenly a burst of Automatic fire (latter discovered to be a B.A.R. abandoned intact with ammunition by Philippine Army men of the 51st Div.) very close caused me to look up. I saw Lt. Franklin stagger off to the left clutching his chest. After a few minutes I started back. It was impossible to go through the matted cane field without making a lot of noise. This worked to our advantage when we defended the

294

area later. When I arrived at the lateral trail, about 50 yards from the Ravine, I sent the Runner to Battalion Headquarters with the situation and had the 1st platoon stretch over to cover this trail junction. Then taking two hand grenades I went back up the trail to a slight bend and threw the grenades in the general direction of the previous firing. The grenades had no apparent effect for the B.A.R. began firing. These bursts were several feet off the ground and I could crawl up to the bodies without danger. However when I reached a point about 10 yards from the bodies a sniper from a tree across the Ravine also started firing. His fire was too close so I returned. I couldn't hear any sound from Lt. Franklin. I went to the C.P. and asked for Mortar fire. Observation was practically non existant - imagine a ten foot high cornfield interlaced with vines with an observer on one side and the burst on the other and you will have a fair idea. In addition the 3 inch trench mortar ammunition that was being fired from the 81 mm mortar was not too dependable for accuracy. The Bn Commander said "OK" if creeping adjustment was used. Six rounds were fired of which three were duds. One round seemed to land about right. After each round I had to walk back to the mortar position to report the results. After the last round had been fired I went back up the cane trail. The automatic fire now came from a position about 50 yds left and two snipers were covering the trail. Nothing was gained.

The platoons were organized into double sentinels and four man posts at trail junctions so that the men could get a little sleep.

The Company C.P. was established about 40 yds from the Battalion C.P. in the same little Ravine. (For position see Map #2) Company "K" of the 3rd Bn was put into the line to connect "B" Company and "G" Company. However a gap of 800 yards existed and the rest of the third Bn was committed the next day to close the gap. The night passed without much activity - a few patrols and a few flares.

The morning of the 18th was spent awaiting orders and eating sugar cane which supplied both food and water. One of my acting Corporals got killed by the B.A.R at the Ravine because he returned with a false report. The acting Corporal was sent to see if the Japs were still at the end of the trail. He reported that they were gone and also the bodies of the men killed the day before. About an hour later he was looking for a canteen. I told him that one was left in the same place I had picked up the belt. He went back up and then discovered the bodies. The same thing happened to him as happened to Lt. Franklin. However, before he went on the original mission I had cautioned him to stay close to the ground. If he had completed his first job he would not have been killed a few hours later. About noon our first food arrived - canned fish, canned tomatoes, and bread.

The 45th Inf. (P.S.) was expected during the day and a coordinated attack was to be launched. That afternoon the 45th Inf. (P.S.) less one Battalion took over the line held by the 43rd Inf. (P.A.) and attacked about 1600. They arrived without opposition at what they believed to be the old MLR but this was not the correct position, again due to faulty maps. One platoon of "F" Company with Capt. Conrad went with the 45th Inf. (P.S.) to maintain contact. One Battalion of the 45th Inf. (P.S.) was put in the line

on the left of the 31st Inf. (7); the remainder on the right. The next day, 19 January, one Battalion of the 45th Inf. (P.S.) was to continue the attack and reach the old MLR the remaining Battalion was to attack S.W. and pinch off the penetration in front of the 31st Inf. That night, 18 January, we received a hot meal about 2100. Enemy patrol activity was increased during the night. However, by dropping grenades into the Ravine it soon ceased.

The plan of attack for the 2nd Battalion was with Companies echeloned to the left rear. "E" Company was to keep contact with the Battalion of the 45th Inf. (P.S.) and move out when the area had been cleared. The artillery fired only a few rounds because they couldn't tell where they would land. "G" Company was between "E" Company and "F" Company. By noon "E" Company and "G" Company were in the Ravine, "F" Company still on near side in contact with the 3rd Battalion. We waited about an hour - nothing happened. I sent a runner to "E" Company to see what was happening. (Runner was our only means of communication.) He reported that "E" Company was on our right and they didn't know what was happening. After another hour I went myself to see what was happening. When I reached the "E" Company men I found only about a squad. They didn't know where the rest of "E" Company was. I sent this word back to Battalion. A while later Maj. O'Donovan, Battalion Executive Officer, came back and said "Attack at once." It was now about 1700-1730. By 1800 the squad columns started up the side of the Ravine. One rifle platoon and the weapons platoon went up Trail #12 with Maj. O'Donovan and one platoon went with me up a dry waterfall. At one point we

(7) P. 33

scaled vertically about 20 feet in two steps by using rifles to hoist or pull each other up. It was dark when we arrived at the top. The going was bad but the best available so we stayed in the little dry creek bed. We worked forward about three hundred yards. Time now about 2100. We were directly on the flank of the Mango Grove in a draw about 10-15 feet deep and could hear the Japs talking. I sent a runner back with instructions to go to the other group - give them the information we had and to tell them that when they were ready we would join in. We could also hear the other group. However, this runner went part way back the draw and then started up the side of the draw, stopped, and called "Sgt. Fortune, Capt. Pray is in the draw over here - when you are ready, he is." Unfortunately, the other group had also heard the Japs talking and were getting set to do some surprising. A burst of fire caught the runner in the leg. He tumbled into the draw and had to be evacuated. A Jap voice said in good English, "Over this way, Sgt." However, the jig was up and the frontal group opened up with the 3 B.A.R., 2 light Machine Guns, and rifle fire. The Japs returned the fire with heavy and light Machine Guns. Both sides of the draw we were in was covered by fire. My group was protected until we came out of the draw. Several grenades were thrown - some had defective primers and didn't go off. The Japs retaliated with a few, but I don't think they knew exactly where we were. The other group had several casualties, used up their ammunition - two B.A.R's and one Machine Gun hit- and they withdrew into the Ravine. A runner from Battalion met them and told them to withdraw to their former position.

This word was passed up to us. Returning was worse than coming up the rocky water course. Sgt. Kopelke, who had taken the wounded runner back, met us just as we reached the big drop and told us to move to the left a little and we would find some wire. We followed the wire around until it ran into trail #12. We arrived back about 0230. "F" Company had tried to knock the strong point out of the cane field but without apparent success. "G" Company went into Reserve and was given a hot meal. The attack by the Battalion of the 45th Inf. (P.S.) for some unknown reason did not progress. The other Bn went all the way up to the MLR without contacting the Japs but there was a gap of 2300 yds on their left and 1500 yds on their right (7) so they returned to the starting position. "G" Company was now composed of about 55 effectives including cooks, supply sgt., etc.

Next day, 20 January, the third Bn was to attack and clear out the Mango Grove from the left. Tank support had been requested but it was not favorably considered because the approach was exposed to enemy artillery (7). "G" Company was to follow the third Battalion, clear the near edge of the Ravine and when the third Battalion had cleared the Mango Grove to push on through up to the old MLR. "F" and "E" Companies were to follow "G" Company. Contact to be maintained from the rear. The attack started about 0900 and the near bank cleared by 1100. The leading platoon of the third Battalion ran into the Jap fire and after sustaining several casualties and not receiving any help withdrew slightly to edge of side draw. After waiting for about 30 minutes I went

(7) P. 33

forward to see what was happening. I don't know what the 3rd Battalion plan of attack was but neither apparently did anyone else. Nothing was being done. Mortar fire was requested in the Mango grove and the units withdrew about 200 yds. The two Companies of the 3rd Battalion, "I" and "L" Companies, which were making the attack were waiting in the draw for orders. Permission was requested from 3rd Battalion to form a group and launch a coordinated attack from the present position to the flank and rear of the Mango grove. It was 1730 before the attack was launched. "G" Company and the platoon from "F" Company attacked vigorously but drew all the fire from the Mango Grove and another cane field farther to the rear. The two Companies from the 3rd Battalion did not push forward and "G" Company was pinned down. This area was quite open. A message was received from the Battalion Commander ordering a withdrawal to fill gap in line caused by removal of "G" and "F" Companies from the line. Casualties were two killed and eight wounded. This was the last offensive thrust. That night we organized a defensive position on the edge of the Ravine.

We stayed on this position from 21 January to 24 January while the Jap pressure built up. Several exploratory pushes were made. The deep Ravine and alert outguards stopped them. In the 1st and 3rd Battalion areas several night assaults were stopped - one reached the fox holes and Machine-Gun emplacements. On 24 January after heavy artillery and mortar preparation, a flank and frontal attack was launched against the 1st Battalion. Orders were issued for a withdrawal because Jap forces had filtered behind the lines

to the west of Mt. Natib also (7). The only available withdrawal route ran parallel to the MLR to the East Road. Each Battalion was to withdraw leaving one Company to cover each Battalion area, beginning at 2000 on the right end of the line. The covering force was to withdraw beginning 0200 and on the left end of the line. "G" Company was covering force for the second Battalion. We were to leave at 0200 and pick up trucks at 0300 in vicinity of old truck park about 800 yds in rear. However, the 1st and 3rd Bn were flanked and partially overrun by 2000 and were withdrawing as best they could. Orders were received to move back astride the road and report to the rear guard Commander. Part of "C" Company - the 1st Battalion covering force was on the road. "L" Company had gone on through without stopping . Capt. Pierce with 14 Philippine Scouts and 6 B.A.R. from the 45th Inf. (P.S.) joined the rear guard. When "G" Company pulled out its flank and rear were completely uncovered and even though a lot of shooting was going on no one was hurt. We got back to the road in good shape but as we came out of a small grove serious trouble was averted by Capt. C. R. Bess, Service Company Commander who was coordinating with the rear guard Commander as to where he wanted the truck transporation. The remnants composing the rear guard were very jittery and when they saw dark shapes coming over the hill they were ready to start shooting but Capt. Bess stopped them in time. "G" Company joined up and took one side of the road. I checked to see what units were still out. "F" Company of the 45th Inf. (P.S.) which had been on my right was still unaccounted for.

(7) P. 34

Tracers were fired straight up showing our positions and in a few minutes Jap mortar fire hit our line. We stayed there about 30 minutes and after receiving several caualties we dropped back to a new position. After a few minutes the same thing happened on the new position. We then adopted a different method. We would stay about ten minutes in one place and then we moved back 15 to 20 yards and repeat after about ten minutes. This stopped the mortar fire. We arrived at the pick up point about 2230. Trucks were due about 0300. About five tanks were located in the park area. These tanks were given rifle protection and a line was established about 400 yards from the entrucking point. "F" Company of the 45th Inf. (P.S.) had not come in yet. Maj. O'Donovan, the covering force Commander thought the entire rear guard should move back up the road to see if we could find out where they were. It would have been impossible to tell friend from foe in the darkness if both were moving about on the road. We prevailed on Maj. O'Donovan to wait. In a few minutes "F" Company 45th Inf. (P.S.) went passed on a side trail. About 0200 Capt. Bess arrived with transportation. Sniper fire was extremely bothersome at this time. The personal example of Maj. Strickland, of the 45th Inf. (P.S.) was encouraging during this phase for he appeared completely at ease. We were soon loaded up and moving out. It was about 0300 25 January 1942. The tanks now took over the rear guard spot. Just after we left a column of Japs came marching down the road. The tanks took them under surprise fire and several hundred were killed or wounded. This effectively stopped pursuit until daylight. The tanks moved out without trouble.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The most obvious criticism would be the lack of preparedness of the Philippine Dept. However, this was caused by so many factors I'll leave it to history. Then, too, the situation in the Philippines was very unusual. Immediately after commencement of hostilities the Philippine Islands was cut off from normal channels of replacement and supply.

To get a true picture of this action one should also study the Japanese account. A document was reported as having been captured in New Guinea which included this account. It is possible that Bibliography item #4 had access to this document as information contained therein so indicates. However, I did not get to see it and must confine myself to one sided reports and my own memory.

The mission given the 31st C.T. was not out of proportion if artillery support or tanks could have been used. It was a very large front to reestablish - about 6500 yards (7) but the 11th Div. (P.A.), being reorganized, was to occupy it after it had been taken. Also if the elements of the 51st Div. (P.A.) had held, even in part the counter attack would have been easier.

Tanks could have been used on the first few days without danger as shown by the lack of artillery fire during those days. If the Japanese had artillery observation they would have fired as much as possible to break up the counter attack.

(7) P. 33

The almost complete lack of speedy communication greatly handicapped coordination between units. At no time did a coordinated attack come off. It took almost a half a day on 17 January. The joint attack with the 31st and 45th did not come off. The attack on 20 January could not be coordinated. The counter attacking force was used piecemeal. If the 3rd Bn had been committed on 17 January in the gap between 1st and 2nd Bn there was a greater chance of success than at any other time.

The night attack on 19 January was launched without proper planning over very rough terrain.

The withdrawal behind the Ravine on the first evening and every evening was a waste of time and effort. We would have done better to stay where we were and not had the Ravine to cross each time.

Faulty hand grenades, mortar ammunition, and lack of proper weapons - rifle grenades, 60 mm mortars, and Light Machine Guns was a bad morale factor.

Lack of good maps and inaccuracy in those we did have greatly handicapped small units because they did not know the terrain nor the exact distance over which they were to attack.

The attack of the three Rifle Companies on 17 January was stopped by the Battalion Commander because he didn't know what was happening. The 3rd Battalion's attack on 20 January was being directed from the rear and slowed down to a standstill. If the Commander was well forward he could have kept the units moving as the situation developed.

On the morning of 17 January the surprise effect of the Japanese fire crackers was offset by the aggressive leadership of platoon and squad leaders.

Weapons that are abandoned must be destroyed. Small arms ammunition should at least be scattered - better if burned. The Japs secured and used lots of B.A.R's and ammunitions that had been abandoned by the 51st Div. (P.A.)

Replacing "G" Company with "F" Company on 17 January and then using "G" Company for a flank attack. It would be better to use "F" Company for the flank attack.

The effect of the mortar fire in the Grove was neutralized by the exhausting work and time consumption of the crossing and recrossing of the Raving on 17 January.

The withdrawal plans were originally very complete but due to the enemy action the plans were changed. The rear guard Commander did not know the plans of the 45th Fin. (P.S.) covering force.

The partially trained Selective Service men arose to the occasion very nicely when they were needed as squad and platoon leaders and performed their jobs well.

LESSONS

1. Counter attack is the decisive element of the defense - it should include complete planning for small units, artillery fires, tanks, and supporting weapons. Enemy observation, including air, should be screened if possible.

2. Every unit must hold at all cost in case of a penetration.

3. Communication and coordination are absolutely essential in order that an attack may be successful.

4. An attack cannot be run from the rear area. Unit Commanders must know what is happening to each element of his Unit.

5. Do not withdraw an engaged unit to be used elsewhere and replace it with a fresh unit. Use the fresh unit for the new task.

6. Rapid communication is necessary to keep a coordinated attack coordinated.

7. Heavy Machine Guns cannot keep up with Riflemen over difficult terrain.

8. After a difficult terrain feature has been passed stay beyond it if possible.

9. Destroy all weapons and ammunition that cannot be carried in a retrograde movement.

10. Adequate accurate maps must be available in order that routes of approach, zone of attack, present positions, and accurate enemy location can be made.

11. Artillery concentrations must be planned within defense area in advance and known to small unit Commanders in case artillery observation is lost.

12. Withdrawals must be very carefully planned and all units concerned informed of the plan. The rear guard Commander must know the disposition of remaining units and routes back. Plans must be made for all circumstance.

13. Tanks are very effective for breaking contact in rear guard action.

14. Aerial cover is advantageous for a large scale counter attack.

15. Replacements should be trained for each job at least three deep.